MARKING TIME IN TOKIO: THE WAR DOGS DINE OUT

By RICHARD HARDING DAVIS, Collier's Special War Correspondent in Japan.

Tokio, March 29, 1904.

EACH time the war office here announces that the advance of the army has been again postponed, those terrible dogs of war, the war correspondents, cry "havoc," and try to slip their chains. And the answer of the Japanese officials to their demand that they instantly be shown "battle, murder and sudden death," is to invite them to a garden party. This is supposed to soothe the correspondents, and to satisfy the proprietors of their papers at home, who are sending them rich drafts and singing sadly, "It's All Going Out, and There's Nothing Coming In."

A few nights since the members of parliament gave a dinner to the military attaches and the war correspondents, at which they asked us to be patient. As a sop, diplomatically administered, and intended to reconcile us to being bottled up in Tokio, it did not altogether carry its purpose, but as an effort of hospitality, as a dinner of ceremony and, in so far as it illustrated the courtesy and the rightfulness of the Japanese, it was a charming success. It also is interesting, when one compares it as an entertainment with one that would be given to strangers in Washington by our own members of congress.

We went to the dinner in jinrikishas, each with an accordian-plaited paper lantern bobbing fantastically in the night like a giant firefly, and stopped at a house that glowed among the surrounding trees, not from any windows, as it had no windows, but through its walls. It glowed most brilliantly through a square low doorway in which stood many little girls in gray kimonas with glistening black hair, worn a la pompadour, and who bowed and rubbed their knees with their open palms, continually shifting from one stockinged foot to the other, and bowing and bowing again. They took away our shoes and gave us big woolen slippers, and then led us down corridors and along outer galleries into a room which ran the length of the tea house. It was covered with mats. Not with what we call mats, but with what is more like a mattress with a piece of fine matting sewn on its top. These mattresses were sunk between broad grooves of beautifully polished wood, and with the wooden beams formed the floor on which we talked, the floor on which we sat, the floor from which we ate. When strangers to Japan object to removing their shoes and walk with boots upon a Japanese mattress, they shock their host just as thoroughly as it would shock an American hostess to see her visitor stamp with his boots upon the lid of her piano or on her damask tablecloth.

The room of the tea house was bare of all furniture, and even of ornaments, save the decorated screens that formed the walls and the decorated beams that supported the decorated ceiling. The room was its own ornament. The panels on the walls were of native woods of great beauty, and on some in bas-relief were carved flowers, dragons and landscapes. It was like feasting in an enlarged glove box. From time to time one of the nesans, as they call the little girls who serve the dinner, would push back a paper screen with its squares of glistening black lacquer, and we could see outside swinging from the balcony cherry-red lanterns, and beyond them the chill spring moonlight and the black pines of Shiba park. We sat on flat cushions of crimson silk, each with his back to the wall, in a long row that stretched around the room.

When we had last seen our hosts, when the mikado addressed them in their house of parliament, they were in our evening dress. Now, they wore their national costume; the skirts of cloth, silk or brocade, and, folded over the chest like an abbreviated bathrobe, the kimono. There was no brilliant color in any of the costumes. They all were gray, brown, black. The room was heated by braziers of brass set in wooden boxes and filled with hot ashes over which the Japanese passed their hands continually, as though performing an incantation.

A Japanese dinner begins at the end with the sweets, and then starts over again with soup. A nesan placed in front of each guest a box filled with cakes, candy and sugared fruit. The guest is not supposed to eat this, but to save it until the dinner is over, when he packs whatever part of the dinner he has not eaten in the box and carries the box home. After the little girl had explained with much shaking of her head that we must not eat the sweets, she brought us a tiny lacquer table that stood about six inches from the floor, a blue and white bottle filled with saki (which tastes like warm sherry), a saucer of salt and mustard, a saki cup, a bowl in which to rinse the saki cup before we offer it to any one with whom we wish to drink a toast, and a pair of chopsticks. Soup followed on a lacquered bowl, then hot fish, and, on a gridiron of glass rods, raw fish. The soup and the hot fish were as deliciously cooked as at the oldest and best of Paris restaurants, but the raw fish was a novelty which even the bravest military attache and the politest correspondent dared not attempt. After that the dishes no longer came in courses, but were placed at the same time in rich profusion upon the tiny tables. Many with which we were familiar were so served that we failed to recognize them, and other dishes we thought were those we knew at home we ate in blissful ignorance that they were not. Some kidneys I especially welcomed. "Ah!" exclaimed one of the polite hosts, "I see you like very much our devil fish." I had seen devil fish in the aquarium at Naples, but I never before had hungered for one. Of course, the chopsticks were baffling, and of how many other breaches of etiquette we were guilty one blushes to guess. The next night I dined after the European fashion, and when I saw how adroitly the Japanese officers at the dinner followed it, I was amazed at our temerity of the night previous. For the first time I became conscious that the customs of our table are full of pitfalls. As some one has said, the Romans were able to conquer the world because they did not have to stay at home and learn their own language.

But no one of the Japanese members of parliament made any sign that we were not eating with perfect propriety, though we must surely have shocked them. Many of the Americans and English could not understand that the little girls who knelt in front of them were not to be admired and complimented, but were there simply as waitresses. And when the Japanese heard their guests address them as "Maimie" and "Maude," they must in their artless Japanese way have congratulated themselves that when they determined to copy us they knew where to stop. Of course, it is very hard for the visitor to take the little nesans as seriously as they take themselves. The whole situation is unfamiliar. We do not often sit cross-legged, while quaintly dressed handmaidens kneel and bow before us. To the gallant American the occasion seems to demand that the least he can do is treat the young lady as one of the guests. As a matter of fact, one is supposed to treat her with every politeness, even if you speak Japanese, to discuss the food with her, and to give her the saki cup that she may drink with you, but it does not follow that you need necessarily address her as "Good-morning, Carrie."

Our hosts probably knew we did not offend with knowledge, and the little girls themselves accepted invitations to drink, and did drink, after a most polite ceremonial, and, when our chopsticks refused to work, and we spilled our food, shivered and giggled with delight, and covered their eyes with their hands.

After the dinner and the speeches, they gathered up the sweets and wrapped the boxes we were to carry home in napkins.

And then they cleared the floor for the geisha girls.

The geisha is—but, no, in this peace-ridden city, so far removed from "wars and the rumors of wars," where the coming of the cherry blossoms is the one event of vital interest, the geisha becomes a subject of too serious moment to be wasted in a paragraph. It must be saved for another steamer day.

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A LONE BENEDICT OF SUNAN

The young man in white is 14 years old and is the only married man left among the male citizens of Sunan, in Korea. This town is about twenty-five miles north of Ping-Yang, on the road to Wiju, and was occupied by the Japanese early in March. The able-bodied inhabitants were set to work by the transport department, but most of the old people, women and children betook themselves to the hills—not being familiar with the ways of modern armies. This young man's wife, aged 25 years, fled with the rest, abandoning her husband, who remained at Sunan and kept in close touch with the Japanese commissariat.

Dave Rothschild's Way of Landing Fish.

(New York Press.)

Here is a story that is being told about David Rothschild.

David sat in his office in the Federal bank one day just after he had caused it to be announced that he had paid off the debts of the bankrupt company of Rothschild & Sons. A German entered.

"How do you do, Mr. Rothschild?" the German asked, putting out his hand. "Do you remember me?"

"Just a minute," said David, waving his hand as if to prevent his visitor from telling him the answer to his conundrum. "Just a minute till I place you. Let me see," and he leaned back and thought hard.

The answer was too difficult apparently. The German interrupted: "I'm Schmidt," he said. "Schmidt, what you owed money to when you failed. No, not you, but your firm—your firm, Mr. Rothschild." A light broke over David's face. He reached out his hand. Then the German resumed: "I heard how you was paying back the money your firm owed, and I thought I would come in and see you. Not to get my money—oh, no! Just to shake you by the hand, yes, and say what a honest thing you was doing."

"You say the firm owed you money?" said Rothschild.

"Yes."

"How much?"

"Eighty dollars you had me on the list for. I got one dollar. But I don't care about the rest. I'm doing all right."

"But you must have the rest, Mr. Schmidt! I'm so glad you came in. You say you got $1. That leaves $79. And the interest, now? Four years, you say? About $18. Yes, that's right. Here, John," to his secretary, "go outside and bring me in $97."

While John was out Schmidt was smoking a good cigar at the expense of the banker.

"I'm so glad you came in, Mr. Schmidt," said Rothschild again. "I want to pay off all those old debts. If you know any others I owe money to I wish you would tell me or send them around. I want them all for my friends, not just to shake hands with them, but to do business with them. I want their accounts. I want your account. And if you want money I'll discount your notes for you. Here's the $97. I'm glad you gave me the chance to settle up this little thing, and I should take it as a favor if you would do business with us."

Schmidt turned around and opened an account with the Federal bank with the $97. He told all his friends about how Rothschild had treated him. They, too, opened accounts.

When the Federal bank failed Schmidt had several hundred dollars on deposit. So did the friends he told his story to.

Misunderstood.

(Philadelphia Press.)

Tess—A friend of mine was telling me today of a splendid seashore resort on the Massachusetts coast. I think it is called Medford Beach.

Jess—Oh, I've been there. That was where I caught that big lobster last summer, don't you know?

Tess—No, dear, I hadn't heard. What is his name?

EUGENE FIELD'S 'HOWL CLUB.'

The "Joke" the Poet Played On Some Missouri Editors.

A number of young persons of this place have organized what they term "The Owl Club." The members are devoted to literature and music. More famous than this club will probably be was a short-lived band of brothers in voice culture that was ironically called the "Howl club."

About a third of a century ago Eugene Field made the name of "Owl club" notorious in Missouri. The parent branch was in Columbia, where Field attended the state university. Local clubs were soon established in many towns where Field had friends and admirers. A person didn't have to qualify as a singer to belong to an "Owl club," but he did need an exquisite set of lungs, capable of doing the hardest sort of service on all occasions. Noise, not melody, was the passport to promotion.

In the early '70s the Missouri Press association met in annual session at the old Wabash hotel in Macon. Besides Field and a gay lot of youngsters were Joseph B. McCullough of St. Louis, Colonel W. F. Switzler of Columbia, the late Judge John W. Henry of Kansas City, then on the bench here; Colonel John F. Williams, Major W. C. B. Gillespie and a dozen other grizzled warriors, who had dropped the sword for the pen. Field swore in a platoon of young editors and taught them how to make the welkin resound. His civil service requirement was a gilt-edged vocal machine, and the boys "delivered the goods."

They practiced on old-fashioned camp meeting songs till the landlord of the hotel threatened to turn them outdoors in disgrace. One night Field started his band of young rioters downstreet, all yelling like auctioneers at a stock sale. In his speech of welcome the mayor had figuratively passed over the "keys of the city," and Field had translated this to mean that the police were muzzled and the loads drawn from the householders' shotguns.

Hunted Up a Policeman.

So the bars were let down and the editorial mocking birds charged four abreast through the streets, howling like dervishes on the way to the sacrificial altar. When Field had led the uproar to about the right height he slipped around an alley and hunted up a couple of policemen. He told them a crowd of intoxicated revelers was "taking" the town and it would be ostrich plumes in their helmets if they ran the whole outfit into the calaboose.

The tip was acted upon forthwith. The policemen called in two or three assistants and the hilarious editors surrendered without firing a shot. Of course, they protested vigorously, which the policemen accepted as the natural procedure of maudlin men. They begged the officers to send for Field, who they soon observed was not with them. The prisoners were taken around to the guardhouse and to humor them a messenger was sent for the band leader. Field carried an eyeglass, which he operated with becoming solemnity. When they observed him they thought their troubles were over.

"The policemen have made a mistake, 'Gene," said one of the victims. "Tell 'em how it is, so they'll let us out of this beastly hole."

Field surveyed the group coolly and deliberately. He walked around and inspected them from different sides, like a man does who is figuring on buying horses or cattle. Then he turned to one of the nightwatchmen.

Field Didn't Help Them.

"What did you want with me, Mr. Officer?" he asked.

"Well," said the town's sentinel, "these guys said they was editors and that they could prove it by you."

Field shook his head sadly.

"Editors! Why, you didn't believe any such stuff as that, did you?" reproachfully, as if questioning the officer's intelligence.

"Well, no, I didn't; they struck me as pickpockets."

"I think you are right about that," said Field. "I am certain they don't belong to our crowd. If I were you I would keep them here on bread and water a few days, and perhaps you'll find out where they're wanted. Very likely there's a good reward out for some of them. I wouldn't be surprised if you haven't got several burglars and mayhap a murderer or two in that mob."

The victims stormed with rage and tried to get at Field, but he kept the officers between. The humorist congratulated the policemen upon the fidelity with which they enforced the city ordinances and said he would refer to their work in his paper when he got back home.

Field let his friends pass the night in jail, and next morning he led the part of the editorial association that was at large around to see his "menagerie." There were profuse apologies by the mayor for the apparent violation of the laws of hospitality, but the "Owl club" didn't hold it against him. They talked for a while of prosecuting Field for malicious arrest, but finally compromised for a box of cigars.—Macon (Mo.) Cor. Kansas City Times.

Soothing Trouble at Sea.

(New York Tribune.)

Harry Lehr and John Jacob Astor visited Philadelphia recently in a motor car. They stayed overnight in Philadelphia, and during the evening a number of young men called on them.

Mr. Lehr was in good spirits. His conversation was amusing. The talk happened to turn on sea voyaging, and he said:

"Once, crossing the Atlantic, a tremendous row arose among the sailors. They fought down in the forecastle like a pack of wild beasts. Luncheon was going on at the time, and the first officer left the table to see if he could quell the disturbance.

"He had only been gone a little while when the hubbub began to die down. Everything was quiet when he returned. The captain called across the saloon to him in an approving tone:

"'Things seems to be smoother now.'

"'Yes,' returned the first officer, 'we have ironed the sailors, sir.'"